

BOROUGH OF BRIDGWATER

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
FOR THE YEAR 1947

R. H. WATSON, M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., D.P.H.



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Health Department,
Town Hall,
Bridgwater.

June, 1948.

TO:

THE MAYOR, ALDERMEN & COUNCILLORS OF THE BOROUGH OF BRIDGWATER.

Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting my First Annual Report on the health of the Borough. The report is in the same abbreviated form as its predecessors.

Dr. G.H. Pringle left the service of the Council in June, on appointment as Medical Officer of Health to the Borough of Worthing, and I succeeded him on the 1st July.

The Central Office, established in 1942, for the Medical Officer of Health of the Bridgwater Borough and Rural District, has contributed greatly to the co-ordination of the work of the two Authorities, but with the appointment of the Medical Officer of Health as Medical Officer to the Mid-Somerset (Bridgwater) Divisional Executive it has been necessary to ask for an increase in clerical staff. This has also necessitated additional office accommodation, and it was, therefore, suggested that the School Clinic should be moved from Albert Street to the Health Centre at Mount Street, and that the ground floor of the building vacated at Albert Street, should become a combined Health Department for the Borough and Rural District Councils and the Divisional Executive. This would be a great improvement over the existing arrangements, in which the clerical work of the Public Health Department and the School Medical Services are carried out in separate buildings.

The birth rate shows a rise from 21.90 in 1946 to 26.61 while the general death rate shows little change. The infantile mortality rate has risen from 24.89 to 34.02. A study of the causes of death of infants under the age of one year shows that 70% of the deaths are attributed to prematurity or congenital defect.

I wish to thank the Chairman and Members of the Health Committee for their support, Mr. Lean and his assistants for their excellent cooperation, and the Heads of other Departments for their assistance during the year.

I am,
Your obedient Servant,

R. H. WATSON

STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1947

Area (acres)	1,893
Population (Registrar General's estimate)	20,760
No. of inhabited houses on 31st December, 1947	5,513
Rateable value on 31st December, 1947	£132,667
Sum represented by a ld. rate on 31st December, 1947	£ 524

Live Births

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Legitimate	224	262	486
Illegitimate	<u>23</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>36</u>
	<u>247</u>	<u>275</u>	<u>522</u>

Birth rate per 1,000 of the estimated population 26.61

Still Births 11

Still birth rate per 1,000 total (live & still births) 20.64

Death Rate - Total number of deaths 299

Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population 12.48

Puerperal Deaths

	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Rate per 1,000</u> <u>Births</u>
From Puerperal Sepsis	-	-
From other maternal causes	1	1.91

Infantile Mortality (Deaths of infants under one year of age)

Legitimate	17
Illegitimate	<u>1</u>
	<u>18</u>

Rate of all infants per 1,000 live births 34.02

Rate for all legitimate infants per 1,000

legitimate live births 34.98

Rate for all illegitimate infants per 1,000

illegitimate live births 27.78

Other Deaths

Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	38
Deaths from Measles (all ages)	2
Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages)	3
Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age ..	1

Causes of Death during 1947.

CAUSE OF DEATH	M	F	TOTAL
ALL CAUSES	142	157	299
1. Typhoid and Paratyphoid fevers	1	-	-
2. Cerebro-spinal fever	1	-	1
3. Scarlet fever	-	-	-
4. Whooping Cough	1	2	3
5. Diphtheria	-	-	-
6. Tuberculosis of the respiratory system	3	7	10
7. Other forms of Tuberculosis	2	4	6
8. Syphilitic diseases	2	-	2
9. Influenza	1	3	4
10. Measles	1	1	2
11. Acute Poliomyelitis and Polioencephalitis	-	-	-
12. Acute Infectious Encephalitis	-	-	-
13. Cancer of buccal cavity, Oesophagus(m) Uterus (f)	2	3	5
14. Cancer of stomach and duodenum	4	4	8
15. Cancer of breast	-	4	4
16. Cancer of all other sites	16	5	21
17. Diabetes	-	-	-
18. Intra-cranial vascular lesions	16	28	44
19. Heart disease	42	50	92
20. Other diseases of the Circulatory System	3	5	8
21. Bronchitis	10	4	14
22. Pneumonia	5	7	12
23. Other respiratory diseases	3	2	5
24. Ulcer of stomach or duodenum	-	-	-
25. Diarrhoea under 2 years	-	1	1
26. Appendicitis	1	-	1
27. Other digestive diseases	4	7	11
28. Nephritis	3	2	5
29. Puerperal and post abortion sepsis	-	-	-
30. Other maternal causes	-	1	1
31. Premature birth	5	2	7
32. Congenital malformation, birth injuries etc.	2	3	5
33. Suicide	2	-	2
34. Road Traffic Accidents	1	2	3
35. Other violent causes	-	2	2
36. All other causes	12	8	20

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE AREA.

The general arrangements as regard Hospitals, Clinic, Treatment Centres and Ambulance facilities are as described in the Medical Officer's Report for 1944.

PREVALENCE AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS AND CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

The following table sets out the cases of notifiable diseases that occurred in the Borough during 1947. The table is drawn up after making the necessary amendments to the original notifications owing to the corrections in diagnosis by either practitioners or the Medical Officers at the Isolation Hospitals.

<u>Disease</u>	<u>Total No. of Cases</u>
Scarlet Fever	5
Diphtheria	-
Whooping Cough	19
Measles	157
Acute Pneumonia	5
Cerebro-spinal Fever	3
Acute Poliomyelitis	3
Erysipelas	2
Puerperal Pyrexia	6
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	-
Dysentery	-
	<u>200</u>

Apart from the bi-annual rise in the incidence of measles there has been a very low incidence of notifiable infectious diseases.

It will be recalled that there was a sharp rise in the incidence of Acute Poliomyelitis (Infantile Paralysis) throughout the country last summer. The three cases, which were notified in the Borough, were all reported within a period of 48 hours, and consultation with some of the medical practitioners seemed to indicate that further cases might be expected. No further cases were, in fact, notified, but this is a disease which is spread by carriers and it is probable that foci of infection still lurk in the town.

The absence of any notification of diphtheria is worthy of note.

Diphtheria Immunisation

The following table shows the number of children who completed a course of immunisation during the year:-

<u>Age under 5 year</u>	<u>Age 5 - 15 years</u>	<u>Total</u>
209	13	222

The best method of protection is to give each child two immunising injections at one year of age, and a third reinforcing injection early in school life.

Arrangements have been made in this Borough to invite parents to bring their children for this reinforcing injection at 5 years of age, and during 1947 the number attending for this was 138. Although this figure shows a considerable rise over the corresponding figure for the previous year, the number of children receiving this reinforcing injection is still not satisfactory. There is a tendency throughout the country as a whole, for diphtheria to attack children of the older rather than the younger age groups, and therefore, it is most important that the immunity of children, about to enter school, should be strengthened.

Supplies of diphtheria anti-toxin are available at the Health Department during ordinary office hours, and a small stock is held at Bridgwater Police Station and is available at any hour.

Tuberculosis.

There were 73 cases of respiratory and 14 cases of non-respiratory tuberculosis notified during the year. The figure for respiratory cases is 26 more than the previous year.

Mass Radiography Unit.

The Mass Radiography Unit for the South West of England visited Bridgwater for one week in October. The object of this method of examination is the early detection of cases of tuberculosis of the lungs. Miniature Mass Radiography enables large groups of persons to have their chests X-rayed with a minimum amount of interference with their normal pursuits. In the vast majority of cases, nothing abnormal is found. In the small proportion of cases where definite trouble is discovered the disease is usually in such an early stage that treatment can be given at the out-patient clinic, and admission to hospital for a long period is not necessary.

Following the visit of the Unit to the Borough, a total of 19 cases of tuberculosis were notified.

Scabies.

The following table shows the number of new cases treated at the Old Isolation Hospital during the past two years:-

	<u>1946</u>	<u>1947</u>
Male Adults	28	45
Female Adults	56	50
Children	<u>192</u>	<u>203</u>
	<u>276</u>	<u>298</u>

The weather conditions prevailing at the earlier part of 1947 are considered to be the cause of the cessation of the decline in the incidence of scabies which has been observed since 1942.

I consider that there will be a noticeable decrease in the incidence of the disease during the coming year, and it would therefore be advisable to consider combining the treatment of scabies with the treatment of verminous conditions.

Verminous Conditions.

The Cleansing Station attendances were as follows:-

	Number of Individuals	Attendances
Adults	1	2
Children of school age	175	250
Children under 5 years of age	-	-
Total	176	252

Factories Act, 1937

The following tables show the work carried out under the Factories Act, 1937.

Inspection for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors).

Premises	Number on Register	Number of		
		Inspections	Written notices	Occupiers prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	67	8	1	-
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authorities	72	24	2	-
(iii) Other Premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding out-workers premises)	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	139	32	3	-

Cases in which DEFECTS were found.

Particulars	Number of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted
	Found	Remedied	Referred		
			To H.M. Inspector	By H.M. Inspector	
Want of cleanliness (S.1)	1	1	1	-	-
Overcrowding (S.2)	-	-	-	-	-
Unreasonable temperature (S.4)	-	-	-	-	-
Inadequate Ventilation (S.5)	-	-	-	-	-
Ineffective drainage of floors (S.6)	-	-	-	-	-
Sanitary Conveniences (S.7)					
(a) insufficient	-	-	-	-	-
(b) Unduitable or defective	2	1	-	2	-
(c) Not separate for sexes	-	-	-	-	-
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork)	1	1	-	1	1
TOTAL	4	3	-	3	1

Nature of work	No. of out-workers in Aug. list required by Sect. 11C(1) (c)	No. of cases of default in sending lists to Council.	No. of prosecutions for failure to supply lists	No. of instances of work in unwholesome premises	Prosecutions
sewing apparel (making)	68	1	-	-	-

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

1. Water

Bridgwater has a water supply sufficient at present in quantity to meet the needs of the town, and to supply a quantity to the Rural District Council. The supply is derived from springs in the Quantock Hills, but the catchment area is wide and difficult to control and chlorination is essential.

Regular bacteriological examinations have been made of both the rain water and of the water going into supply.

Results obtained are as follows:-

Ashford Reservoir

(a) Untreated water: Five samples were examined, three of which showed evidence of contamination.

(b) Water after treatment: Seven samples were examined and the laboratory report on all was "excellent".

Durleigh Reservoir.

(a) Untreated water: Six samples were examined and in general the results showed evidence of contamination.

(b) Water after treatment: Seven samples were taken. In all cases *Bacillus coli* were absent and the laboratory reports on the water were "excellent".

Chemical Analysis.

No chemical analysis of the water supply has been carried out since 1911. A copy of this analysis was included in the Medical Officer's Report for 1911.

All the houses in the Borough are supplied from Public water mains direct to the houses. No house is supplied by means of a stand pipe. The water supplies do not have a plumbo-solvent action.

Medical examination, with the necessary pathological investigations, have been carried out on the staff employed at both water undertakings.

2. Drainage and Sewerage.

Major works which have been carried out consist of construction of sewers to Sydenham, Sunnybank and Rhode Lane Housing Estates.

3. Swimming Baths.

Supervision has been maintained over the condition of the water in the swimming baths. Samples of the water from both baths have been submitted for bacteriological examination, and on the whole the results have been satisfactory. However, the existing method of sterilisation is extremely

crude and cannot be compared with the filtration and chlorination plants which exist in modern swimming baths.

4. Housing.

The following table shows the progress made during the year:-

	Houses erected during year		Houses in course of erection		Conversion to flats or dwellings.
	Perm.	Temp.	Perm.	Temp.	
Local Authority	224		227		Nil
Private Enterprise	13		4		14
TOTALS	237		231		14

Houses required.

(a) To replace those unfit	...	...	...	...	...	120
(b) To abate overcrowding	...	...	...	...	...	50
(c) where conditions are unsatisfactory, e.g. two families living in same house, but not included in (a) or (b)						1,022

Total number of applicants for Council Houses at the end of the year. 1,492

5. Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

Details of this work are shown in the Chief Sanitary Inspector's report.

TO:

The Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the Borough of Bridgwater.

Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 1947. This report is still of necessity very curtailed.

Complaints

During the year 153 complaints were received and dealt with under the Public Health or Housing Acts, and in addition there were 79 complaints of rat infestation.

In 15 cases Statutory Notices were served but in no instance was it necessary to take legal proceedings.

Housing

202 houses were inspected for the purpose of having housing defects remedied whilst 9 houses were systematically inspected under the Housing Regulations. Demolition Orders were made in respect of all these houses.

There are still a large number of houses that cannot be rendered fit at reasonable cost but whilst the present housing shortage is so acute progress in securing their demolition has of necessity to be slow.

The difficulty in obtaining adequate repairs to existing houses still remains, mainly due to the shortage of labour and materials. The high cost of repairs also means that in many cases owners of low-rented houses are getting no return on their capital outlay and in my opinion a case could certainly be made out for an increase of the present controlled rents in cases where the owners maintain their houses in a fit state of repair. The repair work carried out is shown in the schedule at the end of the report and it is pleasing to note that there has been a slight increase in the total amount of repairs.

Overcrowding

With the completion of new houses it was possible to deal with the worst cases of overcrowding and 11 cases were abated during the year as compared with 21 during 1946. Nine new cases were investigated so that the balance was on the credit side. The number of cases remaining unabated at the end of the year was 12.

Verrinous Premises

The number of houses found to be verrinous was 10, a slight increase on the figure for 1946.

Meat and Foods

Under the Government Scheme, slaughtering is carried out at Weston-super-Mare, and therefore the only meat inspection is that of pigs for home consumption, casualties and the inspection of meat at the butchers' shops.

A large quantity of other foods have been condemned and in this connection over 250 visits have been paid to grocers and similar shops. The following is a list of food condemned:-

Beef	4 cwt. 31lbs.
Sausages or Sausage Meat	1 cwt. 18½lbs.
Offal	15lbs.
Net Fish	13 cwt. 63lbs.
Canned Fish	674 Tins
Canned Meat	315 Tins

Canned Fruit	166 Tins
Canned Vegetables	670 Tins
Canned Soup	60 Tins
Canned Milk	405 Tins
Fish and Meat Paste	16 Jars
Pickles and Sauces	20 Jars
Bacon	15 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.
Butter and Margarine	11 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.
Cheese	57 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.
Jam	1cwt. 80lbs.
Dried Fruit	2cwt. 77lbs.
Eggs	4doz.
Sweets and Chocolate	53 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.
Crumpets	32doz.
Biscuits	22lbs.
Fish Cakes	11 $\frac{1}{2}$ doz.
Lemon Skins	15cwt.
Vegetables	5cwt.
Fruit	3cwt.
Other Foods	2cwt. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.

Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops.

The number of persons retailing milk in the Borough is now 42, whilst there are 35 dairies, cowsheds and milkshops. This is a considerable decrease on the pre-war figures.

The quantity of Graded milk sold in the Borough has greatly increased and there are now 7 retailers selling Tuberculin Tested milk and 1 Pasteurised milk.

Ice Cream

The number of premises registered for the manufacture or sale of ice cream is as follows:-

Registered for manufacture and sale	12
Registered for sale only	22
	<hr/>
Total	34
	<hr/>

The above figures, are, however, somewhat misleading as in 11 cases the manufacture or sale of ice cream has not been resumed since the restrictions on the sale of ice cream were removed.

18 samples of ice cream were submitted for bacteriological examination during the year and these were provisionally graded as follows:-

Grade 1 4, Grade 2 1, Grade 3 3, and Grade 4 10.

These results were poor.

Rats and Mice Destruction Act

The systematic destruction of rats and mice is proceeding satisfactorily. There are two fully trained Rodent Operators on the staff and block control is being carried out.

Two maintenance treatments of the sewers were carried out with excellent results.

SUMMARY

Inspections made during the year

General Sanitation.

Water Supply	26
Drainage	119
Common Lodging Houses	1
Houses let in lodging	3
Factories	32
Rats and Mice	25
Shops	114
Swimming Baths	18
Miscellaneous	62

Housing.

Houses inspected under Public Health Acts	202
Visits paid to the above houses	504
Houses inspected under Housing Acts	9
Visits paid to the above houses	10
Houses inspected in connection with overcrowding	195
Visits paid to the above houses	198
Vermineous premises inspected	10
Visits paid to the above premises	15
Miscellaneous	13

Infectious Disease

Inquiries in case of Infectious Disease	13
Visits re disinfection	1
Miscellaneous	3

Meat and Food Inspection.

Visits to Slaughterhouses	43
Visits to Shops and Stalls	19
Visits to other premises for meat inspection	6
Visits to Butchers	37
Visits to Fishmongers and Poulterers	20
Visits to Grocers	126
Visits to Greengrocers and Fruiterers	2
Visits to Confectioners	7
Visits to Bakehouses	18
Visits to Fried Fish Shops	8
Visits to Cowsheds	11
Visits to Dairies and Milkshops	10
Visits to Ice Cream premises	50
Visits to Restaurants	12
Visits to Food Preparing premises	5
Miscellaneous	27

Explosives

Visits in connection with explosives	30
Visits in connection with Petroleum Spirit	11

Work Done

Complaints investigated	153
Rat complaints investigated	79
Choked drains and sewers cleared	32
Drains relaid	4
Drains or sewers repaired	2
Inspection chambers provided	5
Scullery troughs provided	2
Defective water closets repaired	20

Defective roofs repaired	40
Defective windows repaired	20
Defective eavesgutters and downpipes repaired	15
Defective walls repaired	10
Defective plastering repaired	30
Defective firegrates and ranges repaired	10
Defective coppers repaired	10
Defective doors repaired	6
Defective chimneys repaired	8
Defective flushing cisterns repaired or renewed	12
Defective ceilings repaired	18
Defective staircases repaired	2
Defective scullery troughs repaired or renewed	1
Defective scullery waste pipes repaired	5
Defective floors repaired	16
Defective yard paving repaired	2
Defective washhouses repaired	1
Dampness remedied	7
Ceilings whitened	10
Rooms distempered or papered	7
Foul accumulations removed	2
Overcrowding abated	21
Verminous premises cleansed	5
Premises disinfested from rats or mice	61
Premises cleansed	2
Other nuisances abated	1

I am, Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

R. K. LEAN,

Chief Sanitary Inspector.